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NAD Releases Report Highlighting Benefits of Broadband for People with Disabilities

Washington, DC, May 22, 2002 – Today, as the Senate Commerce Committee discusses the important issue of broadband deployment, the National Association of the Deaf (NAD), a consumer-led organization representing the interests of deaf and hard of hearing Americans, is pleased to release a compelling new report on the significant benefits broadband technologies can provide to people with disabilities. The report, *Broadband and Americans with Disabilities*, concludes that policy, rather than technology, is currently preventing the rapid deployment of affordable and accessible broadband to all Americans.

Written by Dr. Frank Bowe, a Hofstra University professor and NAD Government Affairs Consultant, the report highlights a number of innovative broadband applications that can improve the lives of people with disabilities. For example, broadband makes possible remote sign language interpreting. Through this application, an interpreter in one location can use high-speed communications and low-cost video cameras to provide interpreting services to consumers at other locations across the country.

"We are very excited about the enormous potential broadband applications such as peer-to-peer signing and remote interpreting offer our communities," said Nancy Bloch, NAD Executive Director. "We hope this report will serve to educate and inspire our nation's policymakers to expedite the delivery of affordable, accessible broadband technologies to all Americans."

The report states that as a result of broadband's versatility and value, a parallel adoption of broadband by people with and people without disabilities is occurring for the first time. In fact, the most recent Census Bureau survey on the question reveals that among Americans who have any type of Internet connection at home, equal proportions of persons with and without disabilities have a broadband connection.

Despite these very encouraging developments, Dr. Bowe believes that we are not yet 'there'. His report outlines the need for the United States to develop policies that will accelerate the nation-wide availability of accessible and affordable broadband infrastructure.

"This report leads to the inescapable conclusion that Congress must act to ensure that all the necessary tools we need as a community of people with disabilities are available to build not only the future for ourselves, but for our nation," said Charles Crawford, Executive Director of the American Council of the Blind.

"People with disabilities will benefit in numerous ways from increased access to broadband technologies," said Andrew J. Imparato, President and CEO of the American Association of People Disabilities. "A national policy that promotes widespread availability of affordable broadband will mean more employment opportunities, increased access to health care and distance learning, and a higher quality of life for millions of Americans with disabilities."